DEF 12-5 ISR

INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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TO RUEHCR/SECSTATE WASHDC 1227
INFO RUQMKG/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 267
RUQMAT/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 138
RUQVWG/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 266
RUEHCR/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 421
RUQMDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 233
RUQVRA/AMEMBASSY JIDDA 219
RUQVWCR/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT 99
RUFHDN/AMEMBASSY LONDON 97
RUFHPA/AMEMBASSY PARIS 85
RUDKBT/AMEMBASSY RABAT 57
RUQMVL/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 220
RUDKPO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI 68
RUQMYS/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 57
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MAY 8.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [illegible] DATE 6/18/84
XDS or XDS EXT. DATE
TS AUTH REASON(S)
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KMR EMBTEL 1225; DEPCIRTEL 2154 DEF 12-5 ISR

FRENCH ARMS SALES TO ISRAEL AND LEBANON

LOCAL SPECULATION ON FRENCH ARMS SALES TO ISRAEL AND LEBANON CONTINUING UNABATED. WHILE OFFICIAL LEBANESE NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY MAY 7 FELT IMPELLED QUOTE "OFFICIAL LEBANESE SOURCE" IN PARIS THAT BEIRUT PRESS REPORTS ALLEGING IMPENDING FRENCH MISSILE SALE TO ISRAEL WERE "UTTERLY FALSE", INDEPENDENT SISTER PAPERS DAILY STAR AND AL-HAYAT MAY 8 CAST DOUBTS BY ASKING WHY FRENCH THEMSELVES HAD

(2)

PAGE TWO RUQMBE 526B C O N F I D E N T I A L
NOT OFFICIALLY DENIED REPORTS IF THEY NOT TRUE. HAYAT, IN EDITORIAL ON SAME DAY, EXPLAINED IT HAD RECEIVED MISSILE REPORT TWO WEEKS EARLIER, HAD BEEN UNABLE CONFIRM IT, BUT HAD FINALLY DECIDED PUBLISH IT ON "OWN RESPONSIBILITY" AS PUBLIC SERVICE AND IN EXPECTATION OF INDUCING OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION OR DENIAL FROM GOVERNMENT.

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MEANWHILE, INDEPENDENT L'ORIENT MAY 7 REPORTED FRENCH AGREEMENT "IN PRINCIPLE" TO SELL MIRAGE FIGHTERS TO LEBANON ON SAME TERMS AS FRENCH SALES TO ISRAEL. PAPER DID NOT FOLLOW UP STORY NEXT DAY HOWEVER. INDEPENDENTS LE JOUR AND AN-NAHAR MAY 8 NOTED IN HEADLINES ABSENCE OF ARMS DECISION IN FINAL JOINT COMMUNIQUE FOLLOWING HELOU TALKS WITH DE GAULLE.

PRO-UAR AL-ANWAR IN BANNER HEADLINES MAY 8 CHARACTERISTICALLY ACCUSED U.S. OFFICIALS OF BEING BEHIND CAMPAIGN (INCLUDING SPREADING FALSE RUMOR OF FRENCH MISSILE SALE TO ISRAEL) TO DISRUPT HELOU VISIT TO PARIS AND FRENCH-LEBANESE RAPPROCHEMENT.

PAGE THREE RUQMBE 526B C O N F I D E N T I A L

COMMENT: INITIAL SOURCE OF STORY RE FRENCH MISSILE SALE TO ISRAEL STILL UNKNOWN AND IS CAUSING WIDE SPECULATION IN OFFICIAL AND DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES IN BEIRUT. WHATEVER THE SOURCE, APPEARANCE OF THIS STORY AT MOMENT OF HELOU VISIT TO PARIS HAS CAUSED CONSIDERABLE EMBARRASSMENT TO GOL, WHICH HAD HOPED FERVENTLY VISIT WOULD BE UNMARRED SUCCESS. MOST PEOPLE STILL WONDERING WHETHER REPORT TRUE OR NOT AND ARE INCLINED TO SUSPECT IT IS.

GP-3

MIDDLETON
BT